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# FBI files on JFK:

## No lead too loony, no herring too red

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WASHINGTON — It was a full moon every night for the FBI as it investigated the assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy. No lead was too loony, no herring too red.

Consider Olla Wells from Chicago, who called the FBI here Feb. 4, 1964, to say she had evidence of a conspiracy to murder President Kennedy.

A Mexican meat company, she revealed, had put up \$500,000 to have the President killed. She knew this, she said, because Lee Harvey Oswald had dropped a cigarette lighter when arrested, and it had the firm's name on it.

Eventually, agents learned from her husband that following an arrest for soliciting at a Chicago hotel in the 1950s, she had fantasized ever since that she was a police and FBI informant.

Another woman eventually confessed to an agent that she had forged

her ex-husband's handwriting in sending a letter to the FBI containing a confession to the President's murder.

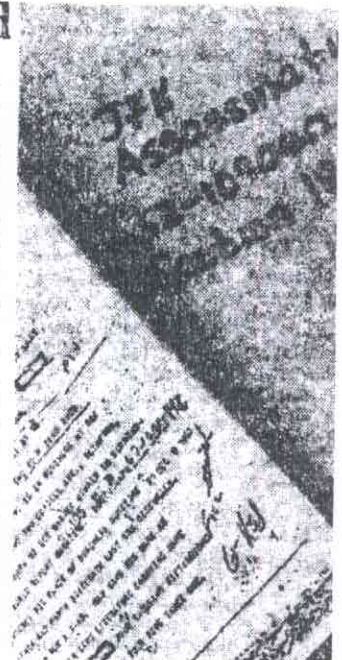
Such was a major part of life for the hundreds of FBI agents who worked on the assassination investigation.

The vast majority of the documents from the bureau's "raw," investigative files on the case — half of which were released yesterday in 263 separate volumes containing a total of 40,001 pages — is pure junk.

However, even in its handling of the junk, it is possible to see the FBI of J. Edgar Hoover painstakingly trying to check everything, ever anxious to protect its backside from charges that it missed something.

For example, there is one memo from Hoover himself to the FBI's Kansas City field office ordering an investigation into a letter received in early February 1964 from one Claude Sandler of Cherokee, Kan. The letter, which contained occasional misspellings, said in part:

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Two pages from FBI's report

## ★ASSASSINATION

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"I do know why President Kennedy was permitted to suffer his violent end. I do know three things he did that led to his death and gave the assassin courage to commit the deed. I have information concerning myself which God shows me that I should now make known to your department."

Hoover told his minions in Kansas City to check out Sandler.

The director wrote that although the letter "more than likely appears to be a 'crank,' it is still felt in view of his allegation and the possibility he might communicate with the President's (Warren) Commission resulting in a request for Bureau investigation we should conduct reasonable, logical investigation to resolve."

Hoover wanted to be ready, in case he was asked about Sandler, to say he had already checked him out.

Some people, of course, got through to the Warren Commission. In one case, the result sent FBI agents to Port Clyde, Maine, to interview Rev. John Holman. Agents reported that he told them God had "punished" the President because of the wrong the government did. Rev. Holman by disallowing \$611.28 in deductions he had claimed on his income-tax return.

But there is much more to the FBI documents than crank letters. There are scraps of evidence by the thousand, leads pursued that ended in dry holes and bits of the drama and tragedy that still form the core of the story more than 14 years later.

What follows is a selection of anecdotes and other items, based on a first-day perusal of the voluminous files:

—One FBI official in a memo quotes the late presidential assistant Kenneth P. O'Donnell as telling a Secret Service agent at the Dallas hospital to which Kennedy was rushed after the shooting: "You are not at fault. You can't mix security and politics. We chose politics."

—The report on the first FBI interview of the then Texas Gov. John Connally and his wife, who rode in the car with the President and Mrs. Kennedy, quotes Mrs. Connally as having heard Jacqueline Kennedy say after the last shot was fired: "They killed Jack. His brains are in my hand."

—The files contain apparently the first memo to go out from FBI headquarters, when only the fact of the assassination was known for sure. In it, Hoover directed all field offices to determine the whereabouts of all known extremists, and other potential suspects.

—The files also contain numerous FBI documents dating from Oswald's defection to the Soviet Union in late 1959 to the bureau's shadowing of him after his return to the United States. A month before the assassination, a memo

was sent by "the director" to the US delegation in Mexico, where he had been that fall, confirming his full name as Lee Harvey Oswald.

—Reporters expecting a day of exciting reading quickly were disabused of the notion by the dull, dreary, detailed FBI writing: "Maximo and Leslie G. Everitt Jr., Chevy Brook dr., RD #4, Princeton, N.J. telephonically advised Special Agent Norman A. Hendricks on Dec. 2, 1963, that Leslie Everitt's foster brother Cecil E. Hunn, 2101 Ward Parkway, Ft. Worth, Tex., a prominent attorney in Ft. Worth, telephonically contacted Maxine Everitt on the evening of Dec. 1, 1963 and told her he was leaving for Ft. Worth from New York where he had attended some meeting..."

—An anonymous letter in Serbo-Croatian was addressed to "Erl Woren, FBI, Washington: Dear Mr. President, Check on Charles Watkins, photo enclosed. He comes from Florida and has connections with Cuba."

—The manager of the general store in Rock Falls, Wis., (Pop. 75) told the FBI that a man resembling Oswald had visited his store in July 1963 and tried on a pair of washable trousers with a 34 inch waist.

—A Princeton, N.J., woman reported that her husband's foster brother from Fort Worth had received a telephone call from an old school friend who was so remorseful the day Kennedy was shot that he had made threatening remarks about Oswald.

—Some of the reports described the anxiety Americans felt over the tragedy. A Phoenix woman called the FBI to say that she couldn't sleep at night because she was convinced the Cosa Nostra paid Ruby to kill Oswald to get even with Robert Kennedy for his aggressive investigation of the rackets.

—There is an English translation of a report to the FBI from the Soviet embassy concerning communications it had with Oswald and his wife. Included is a request from Oswald for readmittance to the Soviet Union the embassy received Nov. 9, 1963.

—Responding to criticism by the late columnist Drew Pearson on the FBI's failure to keep adequate track of Oswald, FBI official C.D. DeLoach wrote approvingly of planning a media campaign against him. But Hoover wrote at the bottom of his memo, "Unfortunately, we are not in a position to completely contradict Pearson."

—In its probe of Jack Ruby, the mystifying low-life character who shot Oswald before a stunned nation watching television, one agent reported he "may have homosexual tendencies. Our files show an association with a pervert."

—One Ruby friend whom the FBI interviewed attempted to explain his reputation for instability and impulsiveness. He said Ruby told of having tried to sneak into the famous second heavyweight title fight in 1927 between Jack Dempsey and Gene Tunney in

Chicago but getting caught and severely on the head by a police and of having had a plate put in his head. Ruby's relatives could not confirm this.

—Included in a lengthy conglomeration of crank mail is a letter to the "Tonight Show" host, Carson as a Communist who has advance knowledge of the assassin.

—For at least the first five years of the FBI and Warren Commission investigations, there is apparent evidence that the FBI ever guesses that three shots hit Kennedy annually.

As late as the spring of 1966 memos repeatedly spoke routinely "three shots." In fact, what is too well known to be the key to the commission's assertion that Oswald acted alone is its contention that there were two shots that hit him, which sent a bullet through the president's throat, Connally's back a wrist, before lodging in his thigh. The third bullet was presumed to have missed the car.

—In its investigation of Oswald's background, an FBI agent found a man who remembered Oswald's wife in her halting Russian accent: "Me like an American. Lee no like Russia. Lee no like America. Lee like the moon."

—The FBI's initial investigation of the Texas Schoolbook Depository Building, from which Oswald allegedly fired at the motorcade, showed 19 latent fingerprints and 6 palm prints on the famous window on the sixth floor. But the employees were never fingerprinted, and there was no indication the prints were ever identified.

—Many of the tips to the FBI were sketchy. A Florida man, Jerry Roper, for example, told the FBI that he had been in a Miami bar two days before the assassination and a man in a black station wagon who drove a black station wagon had predicted that something big would happen in two days. An investigation revealed, however, that the same man involved a controversy in San Antonio, Tex.

—Many useless tips came from addicts, alcoholics and mental patients. A Chicago prostitute reported that she had spent the evening of Nov. 21, 1963, with Oswald. Later, however, she admitted that she was a former mental patient and that she couldn't remember anything going to Dallas.

—By the end of a day of reading FBI files, the tedium of the task reflected in the notes of reporters: "Nothing startling... flailing around trying to track rifle ammo... little value... lots of trivia... excruciatingly dull... nothing that is even funny."